



DEPORTATION REGIME DESTROYS FAMILIES

Victim who has lived in Britain for 22 years speaks out about how the police grabbed him [>>Page 4](#)



Merseyside anti-racists confront the Rwanda plan

Priti Patel wanted migrants sent to Africa without knowing their rights [>>Page 5](#)

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Stuff the Jubilee

PLATINUM PARASITES



DEMONSTRATION

Everyone onto the streets for the 18 June protest

THE TUC union federation demonstration in London on Saturday 18 June is a chance to focus all the feeling against the Tories and their system.

Rallies, leafleting and campaigning can build a march to act as a launchpad for strikes and more mass protests.

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UNION RIGHTS



Bin workers defy arrests on the picket lines

POLICE outrageously arrested three GMB union officials at the Wealden bin workers' picket line in Sussex last week.

Gary Palmer, one of those who were held, describes what happened and says, "We will keep on protesting, disrupting and striking."

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COST OF LIVING

Sunak's windfall tax barely touches bosses' billions

TORY CHANCELLOR Rishi Sunak has been forced to promise some action on the soaring costs of gas and electricity.

But the one-off payments are far less than are needed—and they won't stop a rise in poverty, cold, malnutrition and deaths later this year.

[>>Pages 2&3](#)



by CHARLIE KIMBER

FEAR OF losing votes, collapsing energy firms and anger in society has forced Rishi Sunak to promise some action on the soaring costs of gas and electricity.

But the one-off payments are far less than are needed. They won't stop a rise in poverty, cold, malnutrition and deaths later this year.

Chancellor Sunak told the House of Commons last Thursday that more than eight million households will receive a one-off payment of £650.

This includes those on universal credit and tax credits. The first part will come in July and the second in the autumn.

Separately, the government will provide a £300 one-off payment to those pensioners who receive winter fuel payments.

Benefits

And the six million people who receive disability benefits will receive a one-off payment of £150 from September.

The move is a shift from standing aside and saying that nothing can be done, as Sunak claimed when inflation rose to 11 percent a week earlier.

It's surely no coincidence that the announcement came 24 hours after Boris Johnson's empty apology over partygate.

But the package does no more than partly offset—for some—a coming further surge in bills.

Jonathan Brearley, chief executive of regulator Ofgem, told MPs this week he would raise the cap on household energy bills by over £800 in October.

That will mean that energy prices this year are rising 23 times faster than wages, and 38 times faster than benefits.

Wipe

Ofgem already increased the cap on average bills by £693 in April to £1,971. Such an increase will more than wipe out Sunak's announcement for millions of people.

If your bills go up £800 and you have £650 to help pay it, you are still much worse off.

It's not just fuel that's going up. So are food, rents, transport and much more. There's no payment to

Sunak's Windfall tax barely touches bosses' billions

cover those. And then there are the people who earn too much to be on benefits. It doesn't mean they are well off.

They will be left only with a £400 payment that's promised to all households.

This is actually an additional £200 as it's a doubling of the previously announced energy bill rebate, although it won't have to be repaid.

Just £400 is nowhere near enough to stop the pain of price rises.

The Labour Party is revelling in the Tories' embarrassment of

adopting big elements of a policy that Keir Starmer put forward weeks ago. The Scottish National Party has also dropped its previous boss-coddling opposition to the North Sea windfall tax.

But Labour has such a limited vision of change. In fact, Sunak's proposals go far beyond what Labour put forward in January.

Delivered

Back then shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves revealed a plan which would have delivered £600 to low-income households and £200 to everyone else.

This would have been partly funded by a £2 billion windfall tax.

By contrast the Sunak scheme will deliver £1,200 to the poorest households and £400 to everyone else, part-funded by a windfall tax of £5 billion.

We need more strikes and mass protests to defend and improve working class lives.

The package does no more than partly offset—for some—a coming surge in bills

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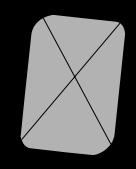
It's not just energy bills that are going up



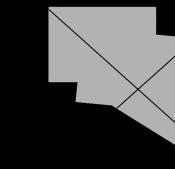
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Thatcher's privatisation of gas and electric stands behind today's shocking rises

SUNAK'S ONE-OFF payment will only mean temporary, limited relief to people like pensioner Sue Conner. The regular trip outside to check her gas and electric meter is one she dreads.

Sue, who lives alone in a small flat in Walthamstow, east London, fears the remaining amount of credit will be less than she expected. She will then try to find money to "top up", but that's not always possible.

"I charge my prepay card up when I get my pension," she told Socialist Worker. "Then I try and make it last a whole month. But it's getting harder as prices go up."

"I've gone down from a shower every three days to one every four days. And I only use the oven when I'm making a dish that will last for several meals."

"Thank goodness for the warmer weather because now I can just eat cold food."

Sue's gas and electric supplier is British Gas, the once state-owned firm sold off by the Tories in 1986.

Margaret Thatcher presented privatisation as a way of sharing ownership of utility firms among millions of people—she described it as "popular capitalism".

It was always a nonsense. Big investors hoovered up most of the shares at knockdown prices and then trousered the profits.

In the first 12 years after privatisation British Gas shares increased in value by over 12 times.

Meanwhile, the average rise on the

They may have to wait for their dividend but the shareholders' pay day is coming.

Behind Centrica stand all manner of vulture capitalists.

Asset management firms Schroders and Abrdn, as well banks such as Bank of New York Mellon Corporation (BNY Mellon) are all heavily invested.

They take money deposited in pension funds and personal investments and place it in big firms they know will make large profits for years to come.

Often they tell their clients they are investing their money in "eco-friendly" ways—but British Gas could hardly be described as that.

No wonder the US Securities and Exchange Commission has just fined BNY some £1 million for misleading claims about the environmental and social criteria its investment funds use.

Centrica is one of the firms pleading against a windfall tax set against its monumental profits. They say the move will hit investment in "home-grown energy supply".

But to Sue, who knows that her energy bill has gone up by 60 pence a day, the bosses' worries mean nothing.

"I keep the lights off in the evening nowadays and I'm always feeling the cold," she said.

"But you know there are pensioners on this street that have got it harder than me."

Yuri Prasad

stock market shares during that time was just 3.5 times the initial value.

Most people who bought a small number of shares in 1986 sold up as the market soared.

Forgone

Today, Centrica owns British gas. Its boss, Chris O'Shea says he understands how people such as Sue feel about the rising cost of living and so this year has forgone his £1.1 million bonus.

But don't worry too much about O'Shea, he'll get by on his £775,000 salary.

Don't fear for his shareholders either. Centrica says British Gas Energy saw a 44 percent jump in profits to £118 million last year. Its parent company smashed forecasts by posting a £948 million group profit.

THE TORIES promised that home energy privatisation would mean competition—and that in turn would drive down bills.

But now most small energy firms have gone to the wall, leaving the "Big Six" firms to dominate nearly 80 percent of the energy market. With this near monopoly, prices and profits have gone through the roof.

Just as with British Gas, parent companies and investment firms are raking in the cash.

Scottish Power is owned by Iberdrola, which itself is part owned by the Qatar Investment Authority and investment firm Blackrock. Energy supplier SSE is part owned by Invesco and Blackrock. Since 2000, Blackrock has been fined over £19 million

in the US for financial and employment-related offenses. Invesco was in 2014 fined more than £18 million by Britain's Financial Conduct Authority.

Meanwhile, E.ON UK is part owned by German energy giant RWE AG, and investment firms Capital Group and the Canadian Pension Plan. Only EDF Energy breaks from this pattern. It is owned entirely by the French government.

For the Big Six, keeping profits high means keeping taxes low.

Between 2011 and 2020, the six paid a combined £3.87 billion in British taxes.

Instead, it would mean the renationalisation of the entire industry, and giving workers and the public a real say in how it be run.

Tory move is a subsidy for the big energy firms

BEHIND ALL the figures is a simple truth. These payments are always reported as supporting "vulnerable people".

In reality, they are designed to maintain the profits of the privatised energy firms that would otherwise face an epidemic of forced non-payment.

That would mean some of the companies would collapse.

Sunak's package is actually a profits support package.

Sunak said the windfall tax "will be charged on oil and gas company profits at a rate of 25 percent and is expected to raise around £5 billion in its first 12 months".

That might sound a lot, but it's loose change to the fossil fuel giants.

Shell made £7.3 billion just in the first three months of the year. It immediately handed £4.3 billion to shareholders.

BP recorded almost £5 billion profit in the same time period.

Together Shell and BP are on track to grab nearly £50 billion profit this year.

The windfall tax is a tenth of that. To ensure the figure is low, Sunak said that oil and gas companies that invest will get tax relief on 80 percent of that spending.

That will be a bonanza for accountants to work out ways to protect companies' loot.

In any case a one-off tax leaves in place the profit-delivering machine of the privatised energy market.

Any genuine move to deliver affordable fuel and a sustainable future has to be based on democratic public ownership, not leaving the fat cats in charge.

Super profits

City fatcats—who else?—get the energy firms' profits

Banks and investors are cashing in too

THE TORIES promised that home energy privatisation would mean competition—and that in turn would drive down bills.

But now most small energy firms have gone to the wall, leaving the "Big Six" firms to dominate nearly 80 percent of the energy market.

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Energy supplier SSE is part owned by Invesco and Blackrock. Since 2000, Blackrock has been fined over £19 million

'I've built a life here,' says man facing Iraq deportation

by NICK CLARK

THE TORIES looked set to attempt the biggest ever deportation in a single day as Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday.

The plan—to deport up to 300 people all at once—will tear lives and families apart.

One of them, Hemin Mohammed Ali, told Socialist Worker from a detention centre how he faced being sent to Erbil, in Iraqi Kurdistan—where he risks detention.

The plan ripped him suddenly away from his partner and child in Sheffield when he was arrested without warning on Monday of last week.

Then—just hours before he was due to be put on a plane on Tuesday this week—his ticket was cancelled due to a legal appeal.

On Tuesday he was waiting in limbo in Colnbrook detention centre.

"They came knocking on my door with a riot squad, a police dog and an immigration van," Hemin said.

"There was no need to make this scene. When I asked what I was being arrested for, they said deportation, like I've committed a crime."

"They came out of the blue, making a scene and boxed me off, took me to a police station for one night. Then they took me to a holding centre in Manchester for one night and then to a detention centre near Heathrow."

"I've been in Britain for almost 22 years," Hemin added. "I've built a life here, I have parental care for my son, my boy who lives with me and is almost 13 years old. I'm the

BACK STORY

The Tories want to deport thousands of refugees in Britain to Rwanda

- Home secretary Priti Patel signed a £120 million deal with the east African country in April

- The government wants to militarise the English Channel to thwart refugees' attempts to cross

- The Tory plans could mean life sentences for those accused of 'piloting' the flimsy boats—even if they are themselves refugees

person who takes him to school, feeds him, raises him. I have a stepson who I helped raise, and now I have a grandson and a granddaughter. I have people around me in the community—my life has an impact on the people around me.

Hemin's partner Leigh told Socialist Worker. "Hemin has had parental responsibility for his son," He was put in our care by the local authority.

"Now he's crying himself to sleep every night. He wants to know when his dad's coming home."

Connections

Hemin says that if he's flown to Erbil he will likely be detained. If not, he faces an uncertain future in a city where he has no connections.

The right wing Daily Mail newspaper says those targeted are "foreign criminals and migrants who are in the UK illegally".

But the Tories' real aim is to scapegoat refugees and migrants as part of the failing government's scheme to prop itself up with racism.

"They say Erbil is safe," he added. "But people are fleeing Iraqi Kurdistan because of corruption and poverty."

"Many of the refugees who attempt sea crossings—and risk drowning—come from Iraqi Kurdistan."

"So if it's so safe, why are people running off?"

"How can they send me somewhere I've never been to? How can they say I'll be safe?"

"They don't care about anyone's life," Hemin added. "These people have no sympathy."

HEMIN (left), who is facing deportation, and his family

Ministers criminalise and brutalise migrants before deporting them

HEMIN IS just one of hundreds of people from Iraqi Kurdistan, Albania and Bangladesh that the Home Office has targeted for the mass deportation.

The right wing Daily Mail newspaper says those targeted are "foreign criminals and migrants who are in the UK illegally".

But the Tories' real aim is to scapegoat refugees and migrants as part of the failing government's scheme to prop itself up with racism.

Hemin's case shows the brutal reality of what that means for many ordinary people.

Hemin served a prison sentence between 2010 and 2015, and has a rejected asylum application.

But his case to remain in Britain was still open, and he has done probation was happy with me. I was assessed by a social worker and my son has been allowed to live with us."

"I made a mistake, I went to prison, I paid the price and I've

Hemin was held in a detention centre

done my time," Hemin said. "I've been let out on bail and I've been signing on with the immigration authorities for seven years.

"Since I've been out I've not committed any crimes, and probation was happy with me. I was assessed by a social worker and my son has been allowed to live with us."

"Ask the Conservative Party why. It's pure racist." He added, "My crime is to be

a foreign national. There are 200 people here in two wings. It's category A security and it's dirty and horrible.

"It's disgusting what this government does to these people. It's full of Iraqi Kurds, Albanians, Romanians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and all nationalities. Their crimes are to be foreign nationals.

"I was in a prison with 913 inmates—and just ten were foreign nationals.

"That means after their sentence 903 British people have a right to go outside and live their lives.

"After seven years outside they come and arrest me like I've done the biggest crime in the world, with a police dog and police with riot shields coming to bust down my door and arrest me because I'm a foreign national.

"They demonstrated physically for the hearing the 'push-up' movement she claimed Bayoh managed while on the ground and

Anti-racists on Merseyside mobilise to stop deportations

Anti-racists on Merseyside are organising to confront the recently announced Home Office policy of sending refugees and asylum seekers to Rwanda in central Africa.

The campaign has already had an important success.

On Friday of last week, an urgent call came from the Care4Calais refugee charity. Around 100 refugees had been brought to Liverpool and accommodated in hotels used by the Home Office.

The move was almost certainly ahead of transport to Rwanda.

Many of the refugees did not realise they had a right of appeal before deportation, but the time to do this was running out.

It was vitally important that they received the information before having their phones seized. Many volunteers came forward and

covered all of the accommodations during last weekend.

On Sunday Care4Calais released the good news that, "The first of the people who were given Rwanda notices has been released from detention.

"The man, we'll call him N, said he couldn't believe it. N left Sudan in 2015.

Militia

"The Janjaweed militia attacked his village and killed his mother and sister.

"They shot and

crippled his father and

shot N in the head and

back, and left him for

dead. Luckily an NGO

found him and took

him to a hospital at a

refugee camp. But the

refugee camp was not

safe either.

"When he was

recovered he left.

It took a couple of

months to cross the

Sahara and reach

Libya. He was taken

captive and imprisoned

for nearly two years,

forced to do hard labour, beaten and kept short of food.

"When N finally escaped he made the terrifying trip across the Mediterranean.

"Having no money to pay smugglers he tried to sneak into lorries at night, but one night the French police caught him and beat him. Finally he reached what he believed to be the safety of Britain.

"But less than

24 hours after arriving he was given a letter saying he was to be sent to Rwanda."

The day before

the announcement of N's release 70 protesters assembled with a banner reading,

"No deportations to Rwanda." Speakers talked about the traumas suffered by those seeking refuge.

The protest was united in one clear message—"No deportations to Rwanda. Refugees are welcome here!"

Mark O'Brien

Full article available at bit.ly/Rwanda0522

SocialistWorker WHAT WE THINK

IS BORIS JOHNSON SOON FOR THE SLAUGHTER?

BORIS JOHNSON has dug deep into his barrel of red meat—and now he is scraping the bottom.

How else to explain his desperate idea—briefed to the right wing Daily Telegraph newspaper—of bringing back imperial measurements?

It's like a parody of the strategy that lay behind his success when he first became prime minister.

Then, he latched onto Brexit—promising to "get it done"—to present himself as a man of the people.

Now—after partygate, more than two years of mishandling the pandemic, and amid a cost of living social emergency—it's just not working any more.

This time, though, what he has to offer—bring back imperial measurements, more grammar schools, and a review of fracking—are even about shoring up voters.

They're about shoring up his own MPs.

It's a sign of his isolation and desperation, and feeds the sense—even among his own MPs—that he won't win a general election. As former Tory minister

Tobias Ellwood told Sky News, "There will be some people in our party who will like this nostalgic policy in the hope that it's enough to win the next election. But this is not the case.

"We will lose the next election on the current trajectory."

At least 30 Tory MPs have written letters of no confidence in Boris Johnson. The number needed to trigger a Tory leadership election is 54—and some Tory MPs think it may have already been reached.

That means one of the only things keeping Johnson on as prime minister is the cowardice of those Tory MPs who want rid of him—but fear being punished

The cowardice of Tory MPs is keeping Boris Johnson on as prime minister

if they rebel. The other two things are the inertia of the Labour Party as it waits for those Tory MPs to move, and the severe lack of struggle on the streets—strikes and protests.

Yet there are small signs that things could change. There has been an increase in strikes over the past few months, almost all over pay.

There have been localised, but significant strikes by bin workers. The arrest of three trade unionists on a picket line in Wealden (see page 6) also shows that the stakes in these battles are raising.

What's more—there could be bigger battles to come.

If there is a national strike on Network Rail (see page 20) it could mean a broader shift in how workers see the battle between them and their bosses.

Other battles on the horizon include the coming national strike ballots in BT, Royal Mail and the Civil Service.

These opportunities mustn't be wasted—they have to be turned, as urgently as possible, into a fightback that can put Johnson over a barrel, not scraping the bottom of one.

POLICE THE SAME EVERYWHERE

THE POLICE assaults on Liverpool Football Club fans in Paris last weekend were not an isolated event.

The attacks were brutal. Video footage showed a slow stream of fans entering the Stade de France stadium injured and in tears.

Riot cops attacked disabled people and children. This is how they are used to behaving against protesters, anti-racists and strikers.

And they are particularly vicious in the Seine-Saint-Denis area where the stadium is situated—it's

where many migrants, and those descended from them, live.

As the authorities came under fire they tried to deflect blame by

claiming "industrial-scale" ticket forgery. But there's no evidence of that.

The French fascist Marine Le Pen says it's because the area is "out of control". And the far right Eric Zemmour denounces "looters, thieves and scum". Some of the British media echo this racism too.

The French cops were disgusting last Sunday, but so were the British police who

tried to cover up the reasons for the deaths of 97 fans in the Hillsborough disaster in 1989.

The French cops are racist, and so are the British ones, from the racist use of stop and search to the deaths of black people in custody.

The authorities and the police like big crowds cheering the royals and clapping those at the top of society.

They don't like gatherings of workers or people they sometimes can't control. Regardless of which state they serve, the police are always the enemy.

Breakfast in RED

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For updates and analysis on the stories that matter go to socialistworker.co.uk/breakfastinred

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Our website brings together stories of struggles the mainstream won't report. It helps you find socialist meetings, protests and strikes—and the Marxist ideas and activism to change the world.

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS

Russia's gas dominance weakens economic war

AFTER THE Russian invasion of Ukraine, the United States and its allies imposed sanctions designed to expel Russia from the international financial system. The French economy minister Bruno le Maire boasted about waging “a total economic and financial war”—though he quickly backtracked after Moscow rattled its missiles.

The puzzling thing is, three months on, the Russian currency, the rouble, has been soaring on foreign exchanges. After falling to 150 to the US dollar in early March, the rouble rose to 51 to the dollar last week, making it “the best-performing currency in the world this year”, according to the Financial Times.

It doesn’t sound like the “total war” is succeeding. Why?

Two factors are at work. The first is the Russian government’s response to sanctions.

It slapped tight capital controls to stop money leaving the country and raised interest rates to 20 percent. Meanwhile, Russia’s imports collapsed, partly because of sanctions, partly because the rouble’s fall made them expensive.

Thanks to both falling imports and rising energy prices, Russia ran a record balance of payments surplus of £45.9 billion in the first quarter of 2022. The strong rouble has indeed, by discouraging imports, made Russia one of the few countries where inflation is starting to fall.

Polina Kurdyavko, head of emerging markets at BlueBay Asset Management, argues this isn’t necessarily a sign of economic success.

She said, “What does rouble strength really mean? Certainly not that the economy is healthy. Growth will be deep in negative territory.”

“Inflation is double digits. Clearly pain is being felt. On the most basic level, businesses are closing down because they can’t import anything.”

And indeed the Central Bank of Russia is cutting interest rates to counteract the rouble’s rise.

But Kurdyavko ignores the second factor underpinning the rouble’s strength. Russia vies with the US and Saudi Arabia as the world’s top energy producer.

Its invasion of Ukraine has advantaged Vladimir Putin’s regime by pushing up energy prices. The great irony is the European Union continues to depend on Russian gas. In the first two months after the invasion, Russia exported £49.9 billion worth of fossil fuels via ship and pipeline, according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (Crea).

Fossil

The Financial Times reports, “The EU has imported 71 percent of Russian fossil fuel exports since the start of the invasion, Crea said. About a quarter went to just six EU ports, including Rotterdam and Maasvlakte in the Netherlands and Trieste in Italy.”

“The researchers found that daily deliveries of oil to the EU fell 20 percent during the first three weeks of April compared with the month from 23 January, while those of coal dropped 40 percent. But deliveries of liquefied natural gas to the EU increased by 20 percent and jumped 80 percent to countries outside the EU.”

The three largest importers of Russian fossil fuels are Germany—£7 billion in the first two months after the invasion—Italy, and China—both a bit less than £5.5 billion.

Trade in energy was excluded from the initial package of sanctions. There is of course a tremendous amount of talk in European capitals about banning Russian gas imports. But the EU still has to agree on a less disruptive ban on oil imports.

There are technical obstacles to banning Russian gas. The European energy system is geared to importing gas via pipelines from Russia. Developing the capacity to import liquefied natural gas from the US or the Middle East instead will take time.

But the problem is also one of overall supply, as Helen Thompson of Cambridge University points out, “Energy sanctions against Russia have been so limited because China’s rise has permanently changed energy markets. Quite simply, it is difficult to meet present world demand for oil and gas without Russian supplies.”

Russia’s importance as an energy producer means it’s impossible to expel it from the global economic system. Whatever happens in the military struggle over Ukraine won’t change this.



COPS ARREST GMB union official Gary Palmer last week during the bin strike in Wealden, Sussex

Wealden bin workers refuse to back down after arrests

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

STRIKING refuse workers headed back to picket lines in Wealden, Sussex on Monday after three union activists were arrested and handcuffed by the cops last week.

Gary Palmer, a GMB organiser, was handcuffed and arrested at the Amberstone depot in Wealden.

The workers who are outsourced to Biffa have been striking for over a month to win £12.50 an hour for loaders and £15.50 for drivers.

Palmer told Socialist Worker that he believes that the police arrests were a “stage-managed” attempt to break the strikes.

“This was a plot between outsourcer Biffa, Wealden council and the police,” he said.

“We knew it was because the council had recalled all the trucks to the Amberstone depot the night before.”

“The police arrived at the picket line and told us they were there ‘just in case’ an offence occurred. They were looking for me specifically, and they called my name.

“I was standing in the road with a line of vans behind me. I was having a cup of tea, and they told me to move.

“I said I wouldn’t. Then it stopped being so calm, a line

of police stepped forward, and I was arrested.”

Palmer was taken to Eastbourne police station, charged with obstruction of a highway, and is banned from going within 100 metres of the Amberstone depot.

Palmer says he believes what happened on Friday will be repeated elsewhere. “We will see the intimidation of the trade unionists become more regular,” he said.

“The Tories have given the cops confidence. We’ve seen attacks on the RMT union this week as well.

“The sheer amount of cops



Handcuffed trade unionist

‘The strikes are working’

THE STRIKING workers in Wealden say they deserve more than what the council has offered.

At a negotiation meeting last Wednesday Biffa was still refusing to meet workers’ demands.

In an attempt to stop the strikes, bosses offered a £600 bonus.

But an impressive 97.8 percent of the workforce rejected the offer—and more strikes are planned.

GMB branch secretary

Mark Turner, told Socialist Worker, “The council never thought they would strike for as long as they have.

“They thought workers would be out for two days and then come back to work.

That obviously has not been the case.

“The strikes are working.

“The council says waste collection is at 50 percent capacity. It’s actually probably less than that.”

at the Amberstone pickets was like nothing I’ve seen.

“There were six in the police van I was put in when I was arrested.”

Palmer pointed out that police intimidation has done the opposite of what Biffa and the council wanted.

The GMB Sussex union branch said it would be “very much appreciated” if people joined the picket at Amberstone for “the rest of the week”.

Protest

And the union has organised a protest for 29 June in solidarity with those arrested outside Hastings magistrates court.

“We’ve received so many messages of support and more promises to join the picket lines,” he said.

Gary is clear he won’t stop blocking vans from departing depots to try and break the strike. “We’ll keep on protesting, disrupting and striking” he said.

Workers desperately need a pay rise to feed their families and heat their homes.

“It’s down to unions to show solidarity. We can’t shrink away. It’s time to stand with low paid workers.”

Partygate trouble rumbles on for Johnson

The revelations of parties in Downing Street has caused tension within Tory ranks that could lead to Johnson's end says, Sarah Bates

THE PARTY may be over, but partygate is far from finished for Boris Johnson.

Civil servant Sue Gray released her full report on Downing Street parties during lockdown last Wednesday.

The Times newspaper claimed Johnson had met Gray to pressure her not to publish the report.

A Whitehall source told the Sunday Times newspaper that three civil servants were applying pressure to Gray in an attempt to anonymise partygoers.

But in any case it did not provide the genuinely devastating criticism that Johnson deserved.

Gray has admitted she didn't investigate the so-called "Abba party" on 13 November 2020 because the Met Police was looking into it.

Yet the booze up, apparently hosted in Johnson's own flat, was potentially the most politically damaging event.

For months Number 10 press officers denied any parties took place. Gray has confirmed there were parties in the press office.

Johnson's only response was to make another fake apology to the Commons.

In his snivelling apology to the Commons last week, Johnson claimed he took "full responsibility" yet has tried to wriggle out of any accountability.

Disgracefully, he said he attended the parties because it was "one of the essential duties of leadership" to thank workers for their hard work.

Afterwards he told a press conference that some events identified in Gray's report were held for the purpose of "saying goodbye to valued colleagues".

This was at a time when people couldn't visit dying relatives or attend their funerals.

Dominic Cummings, Johnson's former senior adviser who himself broke lockdown rules, said of his former boss, "He doesn't think he did anything wrong. As he said repeatedly in 2020 'Everyone better

BACK STORY

Sue Gray's report also detailed the abuse of cleaning staff and security workers. Gray described the treatment of these workers as "unacceptable."

- She wrote, "I found that some staff had witnessed or been subjected to behaviours at work which they had felt concerned about but at times felt unable to raise properly."
- Top government officials partied in Downing Street until 4.35 am on one occasion.

remember I'm the fucking Führer around here."

It's not just Cummings who has got a knife out for Johnson. Desperate to save their own skin, an increasing numbers of Tory MPs are distancing themselves from the partygate fallout.

Paul Holmes MP resigned as aide to the home secretary Priti Patel.

He said that there was a "toxic culture that seemed to have permeated No 10".

And Alicia Kearns, MP for Rutland and Melton said calls to move on from partygate "is to treat with contempt and disregard" the sacrifices that people had made.

She said Johnson had misled parliament and said "those around him clearly did not advise a policy of being honest and transparent with the British people."

At least 24 MPs have called for his resignation and sent letters of no confidence to the 1922 committee. A total of 54 letters is needed to trigger a no confidence vote.

An instant opinion poll by YouGov showed 59 percent of people thought Johnson should resign, 30 percent that he should stay.

Despite his best efforts, Johnson is unable to completely rid himself of the stench of partygate. It may yet be enough to get him booted out for good.

KAREN REISSMANN speaking at an NHS pay protest in 2021

PICTURE: MIKE KILLIAN

Police payout to nurse Karen Reissmann, fined for protest

protesting.

"It was outrageous that we were fined in the first place," she said.

"But to know that my fine, which was for fighting in defence of the NHS, was 200 times the amount that Boris Johnson was fined for attending parties is absolutely shocking."

Karen says that the police tried to use publicity surrounding her case to put others off from protesting. "The price of that decision is that things in the health service have got worse. We went into the pandemic with 100,000 unfilled vacancies.

"During the height of Covid, the government first offered us just a one percent pay rise. Now look at the situation—we've got 110,000 unfilled vacancies, and millions of people on waiting lists for care."

Traumatic

The period after the protest were traumatic for Karen as she faced the possibility of being struck-off the nurses' register.

"For eight months my livelihood was under threat as the Nursing and Midwifery Council investigated me," she said. "What stopped me being demolished by the situation was the support that I received from ordinary people across Britain."

Karen says that the money raised, for her fine together with the

compensation, will go to a campaign being run by the Hazards Centre in Manchester. It encourages people to fight for their right to work without the stresses that make so many workers mentally distressed and unwell.

And, she says, the best way to defend the right to protest is to go on a protest.

"Look at what is happening to working class people during the cost of living crisis," she said. "If we don't protest things are just going to keep getting worse."

"We need to be on the streets of London on 18 June to join the union protest against low pay—and we need lots of local demonstrations too. More than that, we need strikes"

Law firm Bindmans, which represented Karen and Pat, insists that Covid regulations did not introduce a blanket ban on protest. "Protest is an important right in a functioning democracy and constituted a 'reasonable excuse' for gatherings," its statement says.

"Greater Manchester Police got it wrong in imposing criminal sanctions on Ms Reissmann and Ms Gallagher. The gathering that Ms Reissmann organised was not frivolous—it was an important public statement about how NHS workers were being treated."

Killings in Uvalde are a mirror of US society

There have been 214 mass shootings in the US this year. That itself tells us a lot about the violence built into the system, says **Sam Ord**

WIDESPREAD FURY at the police has followed the killing of 19 students and two teachers at a school in Uvalde, Texas, United States last week.

At least 19 officers waited in the hallway of Robb Elementary School for more than an hour while 18 year old Salvador Ramos continued to massacre children and teachers.

Under orders from superiors, cops ignored desperate emergency calls from school children inside the classrooms.

Instead, they aggressively confronted parents who were begging them to enter the school.

Parents were threatened with arrest—and one cop brandished a Taser—as they tried to save their kids themselves.

Police handcuffed parent Angeli Rose Gomez. When she was released, she managed to run into the school, grab her children, and bring them out to safety.

Such experiences underline that the police never put the interests of ordinary people first.

Actions

Republican Texas governor Greg Abbott and Democrat president Joe Biden visited Uvalde last week. Parents greeted Abbott with jeers and boos.

He had hailed the “courageous” actions of the police at a meeting soon after the killings, but later claimed he had been “misled”.

Uvalde is the third deadliest school shooting in US history, and as Socialist Worker went to press, it is one of 214 mass shootings this year in the US.

The gunman brought the AR-15-style assault rifle and 1,657 rounds of ammunition legally.

That has led many to repeat calls for tighter gun controls.

Distress and anger that politicians have failed to implement any such measures led students and teachers across the US to walk out in protest at around 200 schools last Thursday.

BACK STORY

The massacre at Uvalde is the third most deadly in US history. It forms part of a pattern of school shootings that afflicts the US more than most other countries

- The US has had 2,032 school shootings since 1970
- Some 948 shootings have taken place since the tragedy at Sandy Hook school in 2012
- Since the attack on Columbine High School in 1999, nearly 300,000 students have been on campus during a school shooting

Around 100 students at Oxford High School in Michigan stood in a “U” formation to show solidarity.

In November, the students had experienced a shooting in their school in which four of their number were killed.

“We went through the same thing. I lost a lot of friends. I thought it would be respectful to help other people through it,” student Andrew Sholtz told The Detroit News.

It is entirely understandable that people call for gun control. But far deeper issues need to be addressed if the number of mass killings is to be reduced.

The Uvalde tragedy holds a mirror up to the violent capitalist society.

Politicians, the state and the media saturate the US with their veneration of military violence.

Their constant admiration of the armed forces and the idea that the solution to every problem is ultimately the overwhelming force of US imperialism reinforces the psychology behind gun violence.

We cannot know for sure the motivations and experiences that led to Ramos’ appalling actions.

But we do know that society’s intense competition and contempt for “failures” produces a layer of people who feel utterly alienated and hostile to those around them.

PEOPLE LEAVE UVALDE CIVIC CENTRE, IN TEXAS, FOLLOWING LAST WEEK’S SHOOTING AT ROBB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PALESTINE

Rampaging Israelis chant ‘Death to Arabs’

by NICK CLARK

TENS OF thousands of Israelis marched through occupied east Jerusalem on Sunday, attacking, threatening and taunting Palestinians.

Large sections of the annual Flag March chanted, “Death to Arabs” and “May your villages burn.”

They also chanted, “Shufat is in flames”—a reference to Palestinian teenager Muhammad Abu Khdeir, who Israelis burned to death in 2014.

Video footage of the march shows an Israeli firing pepper spray into a Palestinian woman’s

face. After the march, gangs of Israelis attacked homes in the neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah—where Palestinians are resisting evictions by Israeli settlers.

And Israeli border cops

allowed some 2,600 Israelis into the compound of the Al-Aqsa mosque. It’s a symbolic site of Palestinian life in the city, which Israelis want to claim for their own, and which Palestinians have fought to defend.

Israeli border cops responded by attacking Palestinian counter-protesters.

The Israeli government endorsed the march, which is part of an annual holiday where Israelis celebrate the anniversary of east Jerusalem’s invasion and capture in 1967.

Palestinians there have lived under military occupation—and faced systematic attempts to push them from their homes ever since.

COLOMBIA

Former guerrilla now fights for presidency

A LEFT wing former guerrilla fighter will face a right wing businessman in the race to become president of Colombia this month.

Gustavo Petro was a member of the militant 19 April Movement when he was a teenager but, following the direction of the group, turned to mainstream politics in the 1990s.

He is now head of left wing party, Humane Colombia. He promises to promote green energy over fossil fuels, raise taxes on the rich and oppose neoliberalism.

Petro won most of the votes in the first round but didn’t cross the 50 percent line to win the

presidency outright. His right wing rival, Rodolfo Hernandez, is infamous for telling a radio interviewer that he admired Adolf Hitler.

The election comes just a year after massive protests against current president Ivan Duque’s plan to raise taxes on essential items.

The large vote for Petro is a sign of a leftward shift in Colombia, and shows people are tired of the right.

But the presidential run-off on 19 June also shows polarisation.

A win for Petro would challenge the elite, but only struggle on the streets, and in colleges and workplaces can secure real change.

Left candidate Gustavo Petro

Save Earth by sinking the richest

WE ALL know the super rich contribute disproportionately to climate change, but it's hard to visualise their impact.

Or it was. I've just seen numbers that paint the most sickening picture.

Businessman Roman Abramovich's yacht fleet alone is responsible for the same annual carbon emissions as 6,500 average people, and his planes, helicopters and cars another 1,600.

That's the whole population of Totnes.

Producer David Geffen isn't far behind. His yachts spew the yearly equivalent of 4,000 people and his 'other transport' another 400.

Sales of superyachts, the world's single most polluting asset, almost doubled last year as the rich got richer and the rest of us struggled to make ends meet.

A tenth of all flights out of France are now in privately-owned planes that generate as much carbon dioxide in four hours as the average person in the European Union does all year.

And on and on it goes. Billionaires zooming around in super-polluting toys while the rest of us are told to tighten our belts and reduce our carbon footprints.

We don't have much choice. Low wages and inflation have seen to that.

I don't usually advocate individual solutions for climate change. But I'll make an exception for this lot.

Rinse the rich. Better still—let's get rid of them all together.

Kim Hunter
Scarborough

No backdown to the crackdown on activists

IN A very worrying development, two Palestine Action activists remain in prison after a judge denied them bail at a hearing.

The two were part of a team of nine who on Nakba Day occupied and damaged the Bristol headquarters of Elbit Systems, Israel's largest arms company.

Although seven have been released, Stav Sinai and Ronnie Barkan remain awaiting trial. The taking of political prisoners in this



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Just a thought...

Behind the Uvalde horror

I'M SURE the appalling mass shooting at a school in Uvalde, Texas, has many particular causes.

But there won't be any real change until there's attention to a US society that is saturated in violence.

You can't have endless glorification of the military and its technology of death without encouraging the idea of guns as the solution to everything.

And the cult of individual success leaves out many people who are then made to feel failures and outcasts.

Margaret Skerratt
South London

When money tree blooms

CHANCELLOR Rishi Sunak handed out billions the day after the partygate Sue Gray report came out.

Isn't it amazing how the magic money tree always miraculously appears every time the Tory party finds itself in trouble?

Caitlin Morehouse
On Facebook

No buses to cover rail cuts

YOUR REPORT on the ScotRail chaos (Socialist Worker, 25 May) shows how inconvenient it will be for passengers when the last train to many destinations leaves much earlier than before.

I asked ScotRail how many replacement buses there are to compensate. The answer? Absolutely none.

Alan Holmes
Glasgow

Drax hates cash for poor

I NOTICED that Tory MP Richard Drax accused chancellor Rishi Sunak of "throwing red meat to socialists" with his energy support package last week.

Drax has an estimated fortune of £150 million and his family profited from slavery.

No wonder he thinks that any cash for ordinary people is money wasted.

Patrick McGovern
On Facebook

Let's hope this walkout was a sign of good things to come

I WAS one of those involved in the walkout you reported by Altrad workers at Ineos near Hull (Socialist Worker, 12 May).

We didn't win everything we wanted, but it was really positive and I think it might be an example we will see more of.

It was caused at first by stupid actions by the employers.

Not paying workers what they have been told they will be paid is guaranteed to set people off. Not employing enough people to get this right is a really bad mistake.

I am someone who has been part of union-led actions in construction in the past, but this was different.

Lots of those involved had no experience of being in a trade union or knew anything about the laws

about unions. They would have just laughed if someone had said they had to hold a postal ballot and take six weeks before they could go on strike. The attitude was, "It's wrong, so let's get out."

And then having done it they felt very strong because Altrad had to do the plant maintenance quickly. Otherwise it wouldn't reopen on time.

They also knew they had to work democratically so everyone felt OK about how it was going.

Trade unions have real strengths, and I think people should join one. But we will probably see more of this sort of action where people just feel they have to do something whether they are in a union or not.

And those of us who are used to

the speed and the shape of disputes in the last decade may have to think differently.

The main thing at Altrad was to make what had happened as effective and united as possible.

It would have been quite wrong to say that it couldn't work without direct union involvement. The unions need to catch up with the mood.

Young workers, migrant workers and new workers won't be held back by people saying, "This is how we have always done it."

A final point. Nobody was jailed, nobody was fined, nobody lost their job because of the walkout. Union laws? Nah.

Mickey
West London

Tories trample on Pinochet's victims

HARLOW COUNCIL leader Russell Perrin's proposal to rename Allende Avenue as Zelensky Avenue is a disgrace.

Whatever your views of the Ukrainian conflict, we should continue to remember socialist Salvador Allende who was elected as president of Chile in 1970.

The US waged a campaign of sabotage and economic warfare against his government, culminating in the CIA-backed coup on 11 September 1973, which installed general Augusto

Salvador Allende

Pinochet. His regime murdered around 3,000 political opponents and tortured 40,000, and also forced 200,000 people into exile.

Some on the left have

long suspected that the commitment of some Conservatives to democratic values is only skin-deep.

Perrin's proposal to paint over the memory of the best-known victim of General Pinochet does nothing to allay that suspicion.

Many people in Britain, Chile, and the rest of the world will see Perrin's proposal as metaphorically spitting on the graves of Pinochet's victims.

John Wake
Harlow

That we're already being inundated with royalist propaganda is not a sign of the strength of the monarchy, but of its weakness. Simon Baskettter and Sophie Squire look beyond the pomp at an ailing industry in crisis

PREPARE TO be sickened by mainstream pundits fawning over Queen Elizabeth II as she prepares to celebrate 70 years on the "job." They'll probably use words like "stoic" and phrases like "dedicated to a life of duty."

But there are much better words to describe her—"scrounger" and "parasite" come to mind. The only thing Elizabeth II has ever been dedicated to is serving her class.

She was born into scrounging on 21 April 1926. There seemed little chance that Elizabeth would be Queen, as she was third in line behind her father's older brother and her father.

But this all changed when her uncle, King Edward VIII, a Nazi sympathiser, abdicated and married Wallis Simpson—another Nazi sympathiser. While many a rich scrounger liked the Nazis in the 1930s, Edward and Simpson put their enthusiasm against the interests of the bosses who ran the British Empire and had to go.

But associating or even dressing up as a Nazi for the Windsors isn't much of an issue. And fascist salutes aren't much of an issue either. When footage of a young Elizabeth II and her family doing Nazi salutes was released, the palace could only cry that their personal footage had been "exploited."

Throughout her time in power, the Queen has been used as a voice box for right wing policy and as a tool to crush dissent. During her time as a princess, she was even a pawn in a plot to try and crush rising Welsh nationalism.

Establishment

She was made patron of the Welsh League of Youth—Urd Gobaith Cymru—which the establishment believed would be of "great value in improving the relations between the two countries permanently."

On a trip to Kenya in 1952, Elizabeth found out that King George VI was dead and was handed the title of Queen. In the same year, British colonial forces were brought in to crush the Mau Mau rebellion. A reign of terror followed, resulting in the brutal murder and torture of tens of thousands of Africans.

After Kenya finally won its independence, the Queen wrote to the former president, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, in 1963. She said, "I pray that with God's guidance, Kenya may prosper and that her people may enjoy peace and contentment in full measure."



The Commonwealth was an attempt to erase the brutal legacy of empire

Divorce
Scandal has plagued the Queen's children, from messy divorces and

These warm words seem especially empty when Britain only apologised for the atrocities it committed in the Mau Mau rebellion in 2013.

Across the globe, Britain's once vast empire was crumbling as Elizabeth II ascended to the throne. Former colonial states were fighting and winning independence, and so to cling on, the British ruling class had formed the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth website describes the grouping as a "family of nations". But, in reality, Britain has continually gained more from this arrangement.

In 1953 the Queen described the Commonwealth as bearing "no resemblance to the empires of the past. It is an entirely new conception—built on the higher qualities of the spirit of man—friendship, loyalty, and the desire for freedom and peace."

The Commonwealth became useful after the Second World War when Britain suffered a labour shortage. It led the Windrush generation to travel across to the sea to fill in the gaps. It was also an attempt to erase the brutal legacy of the empire and try to create a false sense of unity between former colonies, the monarchy and the "motherland."

Dissent
With the once vast British Empire disintegrating at the Queen's feet even before her coronation, avoiding dissent at home was another priority of the ruling class.

At the time of the coronation only eight years had passed since the end of Second World War, and Britain was bankrupt. Major cities still remained in ruins, and certain food items were still rationed. With Britain in the grip of austerity, the ruling class thought a coronation was an excellent opportunity to ramp up nationalist feeling and create a false sense of shared unity.

No expense was spared on the big day, with the lavish ceremony estimated to have cost around £1.57 million in 1953, which is almost £47 million in today's money.

After the coronation, the elites headed off to Buckingham Palace, where they gorged themselves on coronation chicken canapés, shellfish mousse and tortoise soup. For millions of ordinary people who had lost loved ones during the war and were now living in desperate poverty, the day's excesses must have felt like a slap in the face.

After her marriage to racist, sexist and now thankfully dead Prince Philip, the Queen popped out Prince Charles in November 1948. She then went on to have Princess Anne in 1950.

Almost ten years later, to more than likely sway an election in the Tories' favour, she gave birth to her favourite child and alleged paedophile, Prince Andrew. In 1964 she had Prince Edward.

Divorce
Scandal has plagued the Queen's children, from messy divorces and

racist comments to a well-documented friendship with millionaire child rapist Jeffrey Epstein.

But for all their scumminess they have been awarded a life of luxury.

Every lavish wedding of the Queen's children or grandchildren has always led to a bill of tens of millions of pounds.

Charles and Diana's wedding alone cost the taxpayer over £80 million in today's money.

The royal family owns 20 properties, ranging from the 1,000 room Windsor Castle to the more modest 20 room Kensington Palace.

When the mass graves of indigenous

Her family takes piss, but it's our annus horribilis



GOD Save us from THIS HAS BEEN QUEEN

racist comments to a well-documented friendship with millionaire child rapist Jeffrey Epstein.

And until the late 1960s, "coloured immigrants or foreigners" were barred from taking up clerical jobs in the various royal households.

To this day a clause is still in place that allows Buckingham Palace to ignore race and sex discrimination laws.

Those in power would like us to believe that the Queen has been met with love and adoration wherever she goes. This is simply not true.

In reality, the Queen and her offspring have been met with boos, rocks and sometimes even assassination attempts. When the mass graves of indigenous

children were discovered in Canada last year, protesters tore down her statue.

In Britain and worldwide, millions of ordinary people won't celebrate 70 years of the Queen's reign but remember a legacy of racism, colonialism and inequality.

(above, right) **So heartwarming to have the whole gang back together. The queen joins Harry and Megan to celebrate with now former-prince Andrew**

There's still no future in England's dreaming

THAT THE Jubilee celebrations come 69 years after the coronation and five months after the anniversary of when the queen became the queen is as rational as the rest of the monarchy.

Few people believe God chose the monarch, and not that many care about the church she leads. Few really buy into the myth of her being the nation's guardian. Regardless of the wall to wall simpering the media are doing for the Jubilee.

But that is real gold on those horse drawn carriages and jewelled crowns come encrusted with the real blood of empire. The government is Her Majesty's Government, the monarch appoints the prime minister and the armed forces swear allegiance to the monarch not the government or the people.

Drama

It is presented as a soap opera. But since Netflix has The Crown, the idea of royalty as heritage TV drama doesn't explain their continued existence.

There is a hundred year effort to uphold the popularity of the royal family to legitimise Britain's class structure.

Its height was Queen Victoria providing a bulwark of reaction against radical change while enabling imperialist expansion and capitalist robbery.

Victoria was the Queen of Empire, Elizabeth is the queen of its decline.

Victoria was given the title "Empress of India". Elizabeth came in with the invention of coronation chicken.

The decline is more than symbolic. When she began her reign, Britain had more than 70 territories overseas. Now Elizabeth is the monarch of 15 countries known as commonwealth realms. She lost Barbados as recently as last year.

The use of royals on trade missions in pith helmets helps maintain the image that Britain's rulers want. Many arms sales have been greased with a royal handshake. But the positives get fewer by the year.

Elizabeth's distinctive feature was to present the royals as being just like ordinary people. Previous attempts to not seem detached were usually met with contempt and occasional stone throwing. But this time they stuck with the homely royal sh*tick.

This ran the risk of making them too ordinary and so pointless, or too hypocritical. The risk grew as time went on.

After Princess Diana's death, tensions between being ordinary and being royal came to a head. The perceived feeling that the royals had it in for her because she wasn't posh enough hit the monarchy. Though overall sympathy for Diana actually helped the royals' popularity.

So today Meghan and the former Nazi cosplayer Harry getting away from racist relatives builds both sympathy for some royals and contempt for others.

The monarchy is in parasitic, opulent and very slow decline. The circular game of relying on and denouncing, and being denounced, by the media is part of this.

Jubilee

In 1969, 18 percent wanted to abolish the monarchy. The Silver Jubilee, Diana and the Golden Jubilee all came and went without really altering that figure. It reached a peak of 24 percent in a survey of May last year.

The age group that prefer an elected head of state to a monarch by 41 percent to 31 percent are 18 to 24 year olds. Elizabeth's very longevity means that there will be a crisis when she dies.

They have survived scandals before and because they are more than a soap opera they will not simply disappear.

During barbarism stability can be attractive, not just to bosses but to workers too. The idea that the royal family is above politics can be used to unify people around the interests of our rulers.

The more people revert their supposed betters, the less likely they are to take action against the unfair and unequal society they live in.

The reverse is also true, and that's why getting rid of the monarchy is both necessary and possible.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party meetings

A GUILLOTINE

Stuff the Jubilee—why socialists oppose the monarchy

LONDON: SOUTHEAST Thu 9 June, 7pm Deptford Lounge, Deptford Lounge, 9 Giffin St, SE8 4RJ 529-913-6390	MANCHESTER Wed 8 June, 7pm 323 178 7151
EDINBURGH Wed 8 June, 7.30pm Friends Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL 868-9106-9359	NEWCASTLE Thu 9 June, 7pm 368-595-2712



The Socialist Workers Party continues to hold mostly online meetings during the pandemic. This ensures that there can still be collective and safe discussion, organising and actions. Occasionally branches will hold in-person meetings with precautions taken for a safe environment.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

BIRMINGHAM Did Lenin lead to Stalin? Wed 8 June, 7pm The Warehouse, 54-57 Allison St, B5 5TH 281-634-5938	BRISTOL How can Palestine be free? Wed 8 June, 7.30pm Peoples Republic of Stokes Croft, 14 Hillgrove St, BS2 8JT 688-397-3148	GLASGOW Why you should read the Communist Manifesto Thu 9 June, 7pm Avant Garde, 34-44 King St, G1 5QT 879 2402 3259
BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPS & STAFFORD Tear down the borders – why we oppose all immigration controls Wed 8 June, 7.30pm 914-9548-1031	CAMBRIDGE How can we decolonise education? Thu 9 June, 7.30pm 681-800-4408	HOME COUNTIES Should socialists support Scottish independence? Thu 9 June, 6.30 pm 8341 170 103
BOURNEMOUTH After Roe v. Wade – how do we defend abortion rights? Thu 9 June, 7.30pm Friends Meeting House, 16 Wharncliffe Rd, BH5 1AH 895-2934-4614	CARDFIFF The Russian revolution and national freedom Wed 8 June, 7.30pm CHESTERFIELD Dear England – nationalism & patriotism in sport Thu 9 June, 7pm Assembly Rooms, 13/14 Chesterfield Rd, S40 1AR 828 532 8731	HUDDERSFIELD The Shadow of Stalin Wed 8 June, 6.30pm 290 168 1804
BRADFORD After the murder of Shireen Abu Akleh – how can Palestine be free? Thu 9 June, 7pm 885-9187-7552	KENT The cost of living crisis – how can we make the bosses pay? Thu 9 June, 8.15pm Nucleus Arts Centre, 272 High St, ME4 4BP 434-623-8064	LONDON: ISLINGTON The Paris Commune of 1871, when workers "stormed heaven" Thu 9 June, 7pm 874-012-7970
BRIGHTON & HOVE From WW1 to Vietnam – how people power has ended war Thu 9 June, 6:30 pm 818-9286-5617	LEEDS After Roe v Wade – how do we defend abortion rights? Thu 9 June, 7pm The Swarthmore Centre, 2-7 Woodhouse Square, LS3 1AD 881-4770-0676	LONDON: NEWHAM Grenfell 5 years on – how can we get justice? Wed 8 June, 7pm Stratford Advice Arcade, 107-109 The Grove, E15 1HP 288 098 8827
EAST MIDLANDS The cost of living crisis – how can we make the bosses pay? Wed 8 June, 7pm 868-9106-9359	LONDON: HACKNEY Can there be a united Ireland? Thu 9 June, 7.30pm Halkevi Community Centre, 31-33, Dalston Lane, E8 3DF 854-8245-8715	LONDON: SOUTH Inflation – why are prices rising and how do we make the bosses pay Wed 8 June, 7pm Vida Walsh Centre, SW2 1EP 497-196-1801
WALSH FOREST Why nuclear power is not the answer Wed 8 June, 7.30pm William Morris Community Centre, 6-8 Greenleaf Rd, E17 6QQ 543-023-057	LONDON: WEST & NORTHWEST Grenfell 5 years on – how can we get justice? Thu 9 June, 7.30pm 630-181-4857	PORTSMOUTH After Roe v. Wade – how do we defend abortion rights? Wed 8 June, 7.30pm 488-934-2809
SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE Why nuclear power is not the answer to the energy crisis Thu 9 June, 7pm Central United Reform Church, 60 Norfolk St, S1 2JB 528-174-9278	NORTH EAST SCOTLAND After the murder of Shireen Abu Akleh – how can Palestine be free? Wed 8 June, 7.30pm 894-2628-7708	SWANSEA & WEST WALES National freedom and the Russian revolution Thu 9 June, 7pm Brynmill Community Centre, St Albans Rd, Brynmill, SA2 0BP 902-964-963
WIGAN US and China – imperialism and the shifting balance of power Thu 9 June, 7pm The Old Courts, Gerrard Winstanley House, Crawford St, WN1 1NA 894-2628-7708	YORK & SCARBOROUGH From the Anti-Nazi League to fighting fascism today Wed 8 June, 7.30pm 827-489-7492	

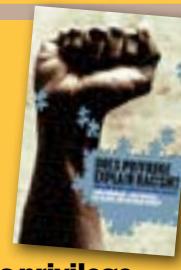
BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop



**The Labour Party—
a Marxist History**
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Crushing workplace grind makes for compelling thriller

There's an unsettling premise at the heart of Apple TV sci-fi comedy drama *Severance*—but it's one every worker can identify with, writes **Sophia Beach**

BEN STILLER'S new comedy-drama, set in a dystopian workplace, tackles the all encompassing nature of work under capitalism.

Starring Adam Scott, Patricia Arquette and Christopher Walken, the series centres around a group of colleagues who have undergone the "severance procedure" at the company they work for.

The procedure physically separates their workplace memories and their personal ones, essentially creating two versions of themselves.

The characters' "innies"—when they are at work—know nothing about the "outie" selves and vice versa.

They transition via an elevator when they arrive at the office, supposedly achieving the dream of a proper work-life balance.

But there's something more sinister going on.

The procedure isn't there to give the workers some escape from the drudgery of some endless data analysis job.

It hides from their outer selves what exactly it is they do for the company they work for.

Consumed

Yet despite this, team leader Mark (Scott) still finds himself consumed with what he does at work when he is at home.

An encounter outside of work with one of his colleagues—who has disappeared only to be "unsevered" or "reintegrated"—triggers his suspicion about the company.

Mark is then set on a journey of



THE JOB—literally—messes with workers' minds in *Severance*

TELEVISION

KILLING IT

Starts Weds 8 June, 10pm on E4 and then available to stream on All 4

KILLING IT is a comedy about class, capitalism and one man's quest to achieve the American dream—and also about hunting really big snakes.

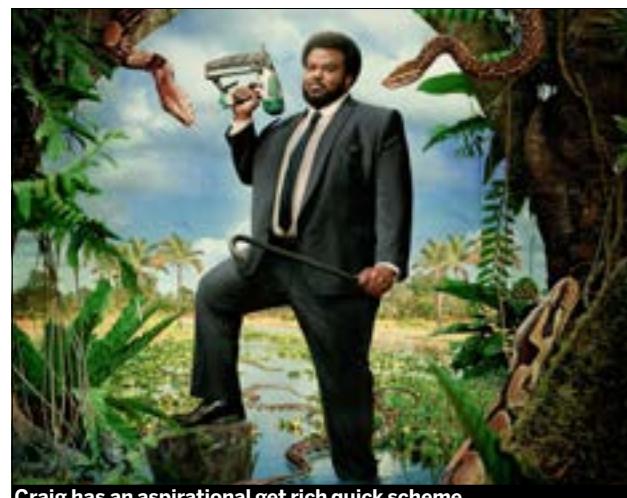
The series follows Craig Foster (Craig Robinson), a divorced, down on his luck, single father and Miami bank security guard, who tries to apply for a loan to

start a new business. He endures a gauntlet of meetings with older white men who defensively deny his application while claiming to not be racist, professing their appreciation for actor Jamie Foxx.

At the start of the series, he's barely getting by.

By the end of the second episode, he's lost both his job and his house.

Then he meets Jillian (Claudia O'Doherty) an Australian Uber driver who lives out of her car. She supplements her income as a snake-killer



Craig has an aspirational get rich quick scheme

battling with his versions of himself and unease about his work at the mysterious Lumon Industries.

Sinister boss Harmony (Arquette) and her sidekick Mr Milchick (Tramell Tillman) submit the workers to intense surveillance and sadistic disciplinary procedures that only the "innies" can remember.

Set in a maze of identical and disorientating corridors the series becomes increasingly tense.

Though it's the stuff of sci-fi thriller, *Severance* is effective and unsettling because it chimes with all of our experiences of work under capitalism.

Forced

Karl Marx quote on exactly this, seems particularly fitting—"The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself.

"His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced—it is forced labour".

In the same way, the work at Lumon Industries also cuts the employees off from each other.

They are subjected to empty and open office spaces, with each department far away from one another.

But as the characters begin to form relationships beyond their offices they start to overcome this isolation—and to question the motive of their bosses.

The film's script, cinematography and cast make it a thoroughly enjoyable and thought-provoking watch.

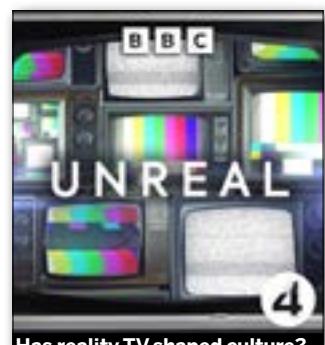
Severance is available to stream now on Apple TV

PODCAST

UNREAL—A CRITICAL HISTORY OF REALITY TV

Available now on BBC Sounds

UNREAL—A Critical History of Reality TV is a new ten-part audio documentary for Radio 4 and BBC Sounds. It features interviews



Has reality TV shaped culture?

with the creators, producers and stars of some of the most iconic reality shows of the last two decades, and leading cultural critics of today.

The series explores how reality TV has shaped entertainment, fashion, beauty, celebrity and even politics, as well as some of the ethical questions raised by it.

DOCUMENTARY

DISPATCHES: CORRUPT COPS—WHAT THE MET KNEW

Fri 3 June, 7:30pm on Channel 4 and then on All 4

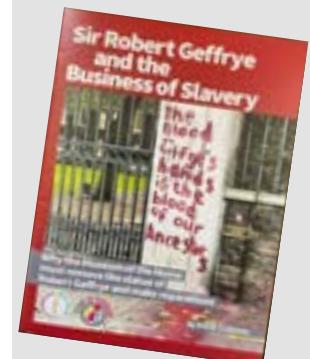
IS BRITAIN'S top police force, the Metropolitan Police, institutionally corrupt? Dispatches investigates the concerns that senior officers were linked to organised crime and murders were unsolved because of corruption.

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Striving to make a killing in a society full of snakes

TELEVISION

KILLING IT

Starts Weds 8 June, 10pm on E4 and then available to stream on All 4

KILLING IT is a comedy about class, capitalism and one man's quest to achieve the American dream—and also about hunting really big snakes.

The series follows Craig Foster (Craig Robinson), a divorced, down on his luck, single father and Miami bank security guard, who tries to apply for a loan to

start a new business. He endures a gauntlet of meetings with older white men who defensively deny his application while claiming to not be racist, professing their appreciation for actor Jamie Foxx.

Craig's only solution, as he sees it, is to kill enough snakes to win the \$20,000 cash prize.

After that, he'll invest it in the million-dollar idea he keeps trying to pitch to everyone else.

From there, *Killing It* winds its way through a plot that's half crime thriller, half buddy comedy, all capitalist critique.

Stopping the export of food supplies during war and imperialist conflict can cause much more damage than any gun, bomb or missile.

The United States currently accuses Russia of hoarding crucial food supplies, allowing tonnes of Ukrainian grain to rot in warehouses. It raises the prospect of famine for many developing nations—particularly in east Africa.

US secretary of state Antony Blinken said, "The Russian government seems to think that using food as a weapon will help accomplish what its invasion has not."

He added, "The food supply for millions of Ukrainians and millions more around the world has quite literally been held hostage by the Russian military."

But Blinken is a hypocrite. Food has always been a powerful weapon in imperialist war, and the US knows this all too well.

During the destruction war brings supply lines are cut and destroyed, food manufacturing infrastructure is torn down, and workers flee conflict zones.

Disruptions to seasonal growing cycles and distribution webs impoverish populations globally. And even if food is available, governments under siege can't or won't distribute it effectively.

Former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger reportedly said, "Who controls the food supply, controls the people."

Often single nations produce food staples consumed by large parts of the world's population. Nearly 40 percent of corn exports are from the US, and 30 percent of rice is grown in China.

Russia and Ukraine combined produce 30 percent of wheat and 69 percent of the world's sunflower oil.

WITH ONLY a few nations controlling much of the global food supply, they wield a lot of power.

It means other states rely on them for food and in turn the suppliers are, for example, given access to build military bases and open trade routes within their borders.

Russia isn't the first to use food as an imperialist weapon.

In 1974 US secretary of agriculture Earl Butz said, "Food is a weapon. It is now one of the principal tools in our negotiating kit." His view was backed up by Butz's successor, John Block, who in 1980 said, "I believe food is the greatest weapon we have."

Food has such an impact because it's essential for human life, but it's commodified, as is everything under capitalism.

You can only buy food if you



A GIRL carries a water can at a camp for displaced people in Dharawan in Yemen in 2017

HOW FOOD IS USED AS A WEAPON

One of the most despicable tactics our rulers will use in war and imperialist manoeuvres is to deny basic food supplies to their enemies. Sam Ord looks at the history of states starving and gifting food to get their way

play a role within the capitalist system. You must work to ensure a wage to buy food. If you can't you must rely on the state or charity for handouts.

The commodification of food grew in Britain following the Enclosure Acts over the 18th and 19th centuries. These laws abolished the open field system of agriculture, forcing the peasantry from their land.

In turn, wealthy landowners seized the land, removing the independence people once

Cutting food to Chile was part of the US effort to back a coup

had. Enclosure was key to the growth of capitalism. Landless labourers were forced to work for a wage to buy the food they once owned. Others settled in cities to work in factories.

It also allowed the ruling class to use food as a weapon and a tool of imperialism.

During the colonisation of America, settlers hoped to conquer the central plains to build railroads. They were met with resistance by those who already lived there.

To achieve their goal generals ordered the killing of bison, a key protein source for native groups. One general said, "Kill every buffalo you can. Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone."

The bison population fell from by more than 60 million in the late 1700s to just 541 by 1889. As a result the indigenous population plummeted.

Similar tactics were used when the British colonists conquered Australia. Indigenous people were forcibly removed from hunting grounds and lakes where they once sourced food.

THE weaponisation of food isn't just inflicting starvation and famine. It is sometimes in the imperialist's interests to distribute food supplies.

During the cold war the US would gift countries food to tie them to capitalism, away from the growing state capitalist, soviet trend.

India was a major recipient of US aid in the 1950s and 60s in an effort to lure the country away from its relationship with the Soviet Union, and to contain India's growing communist movement. The move allowed the US to make trade links and sure up its military power in the region.

Imperialist nations are often quick to capitalise on a natural disaster, such as the earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010. Food wasn't simply gifted to the torn country but was traded for greater US military interference in the nation.

Capitalists restricting food to inflict starvation, malnutrition and genocide has been near constant in recent decades.

In 1973 the US withheld food aid to Chile which couldn't independently produce enough food to feed its population efficiently. Cutting food exports was part of the US' effort to back a coup which overthrew the left wing government of Salvador Allende.

The way food is used as an imperialist weapon can also be seen clearly in Sudan—which was once considered an essential US ally in east Africa.

In 1983 a civil war between government forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army started. Food was politically important. The government was quick to export produce in order to gain foreign currency it could then spend on the military. As a result millions of people became reliant on aid.

The government could also divert food away from the south, where most of their opponents were based.

In June 1989 Omar Al-Bashir took the presidency. The US hypocritically announced that aid could no longer be distributed as a democratically elected government had been deposed in a military coup.

The Sudanese Government pleaded for \$150 million in

food aid in 1990. The United States Agency for International Development refused the request.

The imperialists often claim that food exports are suspended in response to war crimes or coups—as was the case in Sudan. But this is never the case when it's their allies perpetrating the crimes.

Providing aid to war torn Yemen, which is in the midst of a civil war is near impossible. This is due to the blockade of Yemen by Saudi Arabia, which started in 2015 and intensified two years later.

Saudi Arabia—a key ally and supplier of oil to the West—closed ports and bombed fishing vessels. In May 2020 the UN agency Unicef described Yemen as "the largest humanitarian crisis in the world".

But Western imperialists haven't met Saudi Arabia's crimes with sanctions. Britain has sold at least £8.4 billion and possibly £20 billion of arms to Saudi Arabia since 2015, with former president Donald Trump authorising £87 billion.

Most of the aid given to Yemen is now donated by charities such as Save the Children.

Blockades and withdrawal of food aid are never in place to help ordinary people. Restricting human needs is one of the cruellest ways imperialism can extend its influence.

Any threat to capitalism and imperialism, such as left wing governments in South America or Africa, has been met with economic blockades and the removal of food aid.

FOOD SHOULD be available to all, but it will never be this way with most supplies in the hands of major imperialist powers.

And the situation is bound to get worse with rapidly accelerating climate change. The Indian government suspended wheat exports in response to rising food inflation and record high temperatures.

As summer approaches, France and other European nations fear crop failure and extreme weather events such as wildfires and drought.

But major powers using food as a weapon doesn't just starve the poor. It can also lead to resistance. During the Bengal famine of 1943, which British rulers had allowed to develop, ordinary people rebelled by

taking up arms and raiding grain stores. It was a precursor to the final independence battle that saw the country break free from the British Empire.

Today, with food prices soaring, there will likely be more explosions of rage from those who are being starved. This year alone price rises have led to protests in Sudan and Iran. These fights have the potential to topple dictators and imperialists, but also make people question a system that denies them the essentials of life.

For this to end food supplies must be placed in the hands of the people. This is no easy task. It means dismantling the system that allows the elite to hoard and distribute supplies.

Revolts and strikes against war and rising food costs that we have seen throughout history show that change is a possibility.

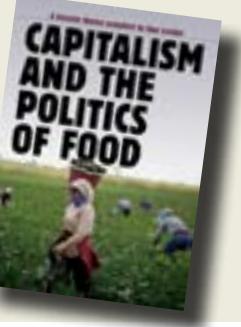
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FOCUS ON LABOUR

Starmer's war on left reflects the needs of Labourism

THERE'S A lot of dirt on Keir Starmer in the new biography, *The Starmer Project*, by Oliver Eagleton.

But Eagleton wants to do more than reel off Starmer's crimes for the gratification of a defeated and desperate Labour left. He wants to discover the meaning of Starmer—what his leadership represents for the direction of the Labour Party and British politics.

Starmer is seemingly a contradiction. He's a human rights lawyer who defended, supported or embedded himself in the British army, police and security services.

The common thread is his affinity to the British state. His NGO-style human rights work meant he had both a "progressive veneer" and a commitment to working within the framework of state institutions.

That made him the Labour government's ideal choice as director of public prosecutions in 2003.

As Eagleton writes, by "charting a careful course between good-cause legal campaigning and collaboration with the security services," Starmer got to "the upper tiers of his profession."

The same combination carried Starmer to become Labour Party leader after Jeremy Corbyn's failure in 2019.

He appealed to Labour members as being someone who would both preserve Corbyn's politics, while "ending factionalism" by being "competent" and "credible" enough for the right.

For one thing, they thought they could use Starmer to "settle the nerves of the British establishment," according to one "source" from Corbyn's office. "Keir was the perfect poster boy for that."

More importantly, they gave into him time and

Eagleton shows how they feared any sort of confrontation, or attempt to launch an alternative "left populist" Brexit strategy would provoke splits and revolts among Labour MPs.

After showing how Starmer has reversed "almost every gain made by the left during the Corbyn era," Eagleton concludes the chances of "Corbynism 2.0" are "negligible."

The barriers to socialists in Labour mean there's no hope that the Labour Party under left-wing leadership is imminently capable of enacting social democratic reform in Britain."

Instead, he says, "a left electoral strategy" has to build a broader movement "through every available channel—most if not all of which exist outside the Labour Party." He points to movements such as Extinction Rebellion, Black Lives Matter, and trade union organisation as examples.

Once these have coalesced into "a movement with clear demands and a popular mandate," Eagleton tentatively suggests, "a level-headed assessment of possible electoral vehicles will be needed."

But Starmer's rise and Corbyn's defeat show we need even more than that—a reckoning, and a break, from Labourism and its orientation on the state.

Eagleton concludes that 'Corbynism 2.0' is unlikely

The Starmer Project—a journey to the right by Oliver Eagleton
Published by Verso, £12.99
Available from bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

Delivery riders protest against police raids

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

DELIVERY RIDERS and their supporters rallied outside Hackney town hall, east London, last Wednesday to demand improved working conditions and an end to police intimidation.

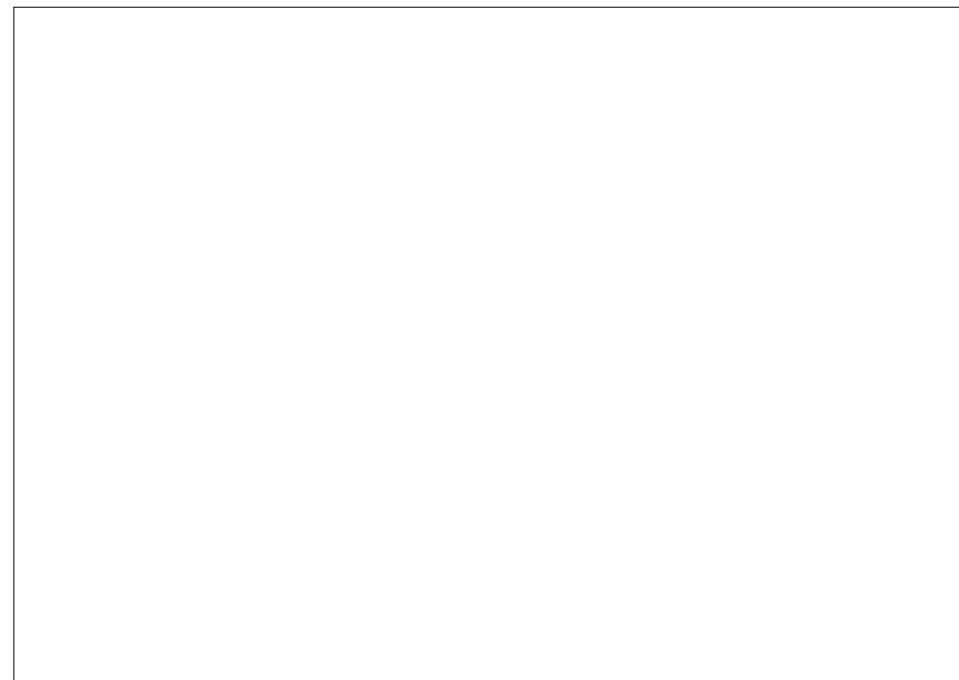
Riders gathered at Ashwin street in Dalston and momentarily shut down the streets of Hackney as they rode to the town hall.

The protest came after the cops harassed riders—and tried to arrest one for “immigration offences”—on Ashwin Street on 14 May. That night hundreds of angry protesters confronted the police and chased them away.

Outside the town hall, riders were greeted by council workers who are striking for a ten percent pay rise.

Alex, an IWGB union member and delivery rider, said police intimidation is a daily reality.

“When the police do random checks, they ask for everything,” he told Socialist Worker. “They ask for your licence and immigration status—it’s scary. They think



DELIVERY RIDERS protest outside Hackney town hall

we’re all criminals. They see a Deliveroo bag. They see a target.”

Rider Michael added, “I was checked yesterday. I was waiting for my order, and the police officer said I couldn’t wait there. They do this

constantly. I feel sorry for all the riders that have to endure this. It makes me depressed and angry.”

An IWGB survey last year found that nine in ten couriers endured harassment at work, with almost two thirds

reporting physical assault. The situation is so bad six in ten black couriers reported verbal and physical violence at least once a month.

In January workers rallied outside the town hall to demand the right to park

outside a local McDonald’s and to have access to toilets and a place of shelter. After this protest, Alex said cops began to ramp up intimidation.

“We feel the police intimidation is a response from the council to our protest,” he said. “I also think the police have gained a lot of confidence from the passing of the policing bill and the Nationalities and Borders Bill.

“In my riders’ WhatsApp groups, I can see that the intimidation of riders is happening everywhere. Unfortunately I think it’s only going to get worse.”

Alex said Deliveroo’s recent sweetheart deal with the GMB union won’t deliver for workers. “In all the years I’ve been a delivery driver, I’ve never met anyone in the GMB,” he said.

“In fact I’d never even heard of the GMB before they struck a deal with Deliveroo. It seems more of a business interaction than something that will help any of us.”

At the rally protesters chanted, “Keep riders on our streets, safe from police.”

Speakers at the protest said ordinary people must be ready

to fight back against repressive Tory laws and immigration raids.

John from the IWGB told the crowd, “On that Saturday the police tried to arrest our brothers, but we stopped them. We need to replicate that success and build anti-racist networks that can stop raids across the country.”

An IWGB statement read, “Couriers are key workers. In order to earn a living, we need to be able to access restaurants and wait for orders nearby.

“We have been fighting for months, just to have the space we need to safely do our jobs, free from parking fines and harassment.

“We worked all through the pandemic, for as little as £2 an hour. But the apps, the restaurants, and the council alike have tried to shirk all responsibility for this issue, handing the police free rein over our working lives.”

More protests and action can beat back the delivery bosses and police—and take on the Tories’ hostile environment.

Sign the petition, Justice For Dalston Riders! No Police, No Raids bit.ly/NoRaids0522

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IN BRIEF

Sun workers rise up against poor pay

PAY STRIKES are set for Britain's only ink manufacturer, Sun Chemical. They could impact the printing of the Daily Mail as well as production for Amcor, Scheizwer and Multi-Colour Corp.

Nearly 200 Sun Chemical employees, members of the Unite union, plan to strike over a meagre 3 percent pay offer.

An overtime ban is set to begin next Monday followed by a 24-hour strike next Thursday, 9 June at seven sites.

Fishing for more than 2 percent

STRIKES BY around 80 workers at Marine Scotland began last week over pay.

The Scottish government imposed a 2 percent pay rise for 2021. Ministers are now refusing to reopen talks.

Strikes on Marine Protection Vessels Hirta took place on Thursday and Friday last week and were set for the vessel Jura on Wednesday and Thursday this week.

The vessels are normally based at Aberdeen harbour.

Marine Scotland is responsible for ensuring that fishing fleets comply with the law when catching fish.

Fawley action could hit petrol supplies

PAY STRIKES at Exxon's Fawley refinery near Southampton are set to escalate in June, potentially hitting petrol supply at some of Britain's petrol stations.

Around 100 workers, who make up a third of the contractors at the Fawley Refinery, struck for three days in April and May over a 2.5 percent pay offer and a lack of sick pay.

Fresh strikes are now scheduled for 9, 10, 16, 17 and 20 June. As some workers provide safety critical services, strikes could lead to shutdowns across the plant.

Hinkley Point pond liners in jeopardy

WORKERS AT Darchem Engineering in Stockton on Tees are set for strikes over pay.

Their action could hit work at Hinkley Point nuclear power plant.

Darchem Engineering manufactures industrial pond liners for Hinkley Point as part of a £200 million contract.

Welders' pay has increased by over £2 an hour but the company has refused to give a similar increase to the platers and sheet metal workers.

Unite union members plan to begin an overtime ban next Monday.

This is scheduled to be followed by three 48-hour strikes beginning on Monday 13 June, Monday 20 June and Monday 27 June.

HEALTH WORKERS

ST GEORGE'S strikers on south London picket line this week

PICTURE: BEN WINDSOR

St George's workers demand pay justice

by YURI PRASAD and BEN WINDSOR

CLEANERS AND domestics at St George's Hospital in Tooting, south London struck this week in a fight over pay.

They picketed and then around 150 of them—and their—supporters marched through the streets.

Workers are outsourced to hated privatisation firm Mitie and are members of the GMB union. They are demanding compensation from Mitie for hardship caused by the firm.

The company caused huge anger earlier this year when it withheld wages for seven weeks while it restructured pay cycles.

In addition, the union wants all outsourced workers at the hospital employed on pay, terms and conditions equivalent to those that work directly for the NHS.

"We need one contract. We are not treated right," a striker told Socialist Worker.

"The pay is so low I have to get up at 3am to do another job before I come here."

"Recently Mitie changed our pay day without notification."

"One colleague got kicked out of their home because they weren't able to pay the rent on time."

The striker also said that privatisation was a form of divide and rule.

"We have two different

contracts—NHS Agenda for Change and Mitie. Staff are divided by this.

"Mitie made a lot of people redundant about two years ago when they won a new contract—with the lowest bid—and that means more work for the rest of us."

The GMB is set to follow Monday's 24-hour strike with two further days of action from Monday.

"Our members want compensation for the suffering Mitie put them through," said GMB regional organiser Helen O'Connor. "And they want fair and equal terms and conditions."

• Tweet support to @GMSouthern

SCHOOLS

Connaught cleaners victorious

FOLLOWING FIVE days of strikes, cleaners at Connaught School for Girls in Leytonstone, east London, will not be outsourced to a firm that has worse terms and conditions.

The cleaners would have been forced to cut working weeks from 52 to 43, lose their union recognition and their annual pay rate.

Workers also won some protections over future outsourcing.

The cleaners, members of the NEU union, would also have lost access to the local government pension scheme. But this shameless attack on some of the lowest paid workers at the school was beaten back by workers' action.

Walthamstow primary workers show how to win big

WORKERS AT two London schools are taking on multi-academy trust United Learning—and strikes are already scoring important victories.

Workers at Walthamstow Primary Academy, in east London, have won major concessions after 17 days of solid strikes.

Initially the workers put forward 49 issues related to workload, bullying, equality and more.

All of those issues except pay have been resolved.

It's a stunning victory, and shows that hard-hitting action works.

And it's an example that workers at Holland Park School in west London will be looking to.

There, teachers and support staff are striking for three days from Tuesday this week.

They are taking action

against "the obscure and undemocratic actions of the governing body".

Workers don't want the school to join United Learning.

The teachers said, "We want to be at school teaching and supporting our students."

"Some of our members are working to support

EDUCATION

Left marks Jo Grady as 'completely inadequate'

WORKERS AT around 20 university branches continued a marking and assessment boycott last week. The action was rolled out despite those at the top of the UCU union trying to dismantle the dispute.

Workers have waged a long-running battle against their pensions being sold off to a worse scheme. And they're also fighting over pay, workloads, casualisation and equalities—known as the "four fights".

Management in several institutions have threatened workers with deductions of up to 100 percent of their pay for taking part in the marking and assessment boycott.

Workers' determination to keep on fighting in the face of bosses' attacks show how strongly they feel about the dispute.

But this resolve is not shared by UCU general secretary Jo Grady or her supporters who have tried to crush this dispute.

The union could have backed the boycott by calling strikes and twinned non-participating branches with those taking part.

This week the UCU Left group are calling for the censure of Grady at UCU congress.

It wrote, "The Four Fights and USS disputes are turning into a model of how not to organise a Britain-wide dispute."

It added, "In the context of the worst cost of living crisis in a generation, the general secretary's plan to pause the fights until next year is completely inadequate."

"It would condemn us to yet another year of real-terms pay cuts."

It effectively concedes as permanent the changes imposed to USS, and it abandons our casualised colleagues and those suffering from pay gaps to their fate."

UCU Left also pointed out that despite Grady initially being voted in as president to make change in the union in 2018, she has taken the same route as her predecessor Sally Hunt.

New leadership is desperately needed in the UCU and for the union listen to the voice of members and activists.

East London fightback

THE SCHOOL strike wave across Walthamstow, east London, continues. Workers at Hornbeam Academy are balloting over restructures and redundancies.

Workers at Gwyn Jones Primary School are balloting against redundancies, pay loss and workload. And at Our

Lady and St George, NEU members are balloting against a planned restructuring.

If workers linked up their disputes, it could see hundreds of workers walk out together across the borough.

United action can make bosses keen to sit at the negotiating table.

On the picket line at Walthamstow Primary last month—a lesson in how to fight back

against "the obscure and undemocratic actions of the governing body".

Workers don't want the school to join United Learning.

The teachers said, "We want to be at school teaching and supporting our students."

"Some of our members are working to support

our Send students through their examinations.

Any insinuation that we don't have the students' best interests at heart is a falsehood and is insulting to all members of staff who are making this very difficult choice."

Parents and teachers are concerned that there hasn't been a consultation

into the proposals. And the governors chose not to accept the staff's invitation to join their meeting on Monday.

Walthamstow Primary Academy workers have shown how to fight back.

Now Holland Park workers should keep striking until they can claim complete success.

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

18 June—everyone get on to the streets

THE “WE Demand Better” demonstration called for 18 June by the TUC union federation in London has to be a major focus for everyone who wants to see a bigger fightback against the Tories and their system,

In many areas trade unionists and campaigners are organising to hand out leaflets for the march.

The TUC is appealing for activists to turn out across Britain next Wednesday, 8 June, to leaflet train stations.

There are also a series of local meetings set up to bring people together to boost the demo.

On Thursday last week 75 people came to a rally in Hastings. Bella Fashola, RMT union rep for the Churchill train cleaners, described their fight for £15 an hour and called for support on their picket lines over the Jubilee bank holiday weekend.

Darren Smith, GMB union convenor for the Hastings refuse collectors said, “We’ve discovered our own worth and we’ve learned how to fight.”

Paul Jones, Unison union rep at the local Conquest



HASTINGS UNISON campaigning at Conquest hospital

Hospital, said, “We are watching the NHS die due to government cuts and workers’ poverty.”

Paul Barnett, the new Labour leader of Hastings council, denounced the Tories for conducting “class war against poor people”.

Diane Ebanks, PCS London and South East regional secretary, made a strong speech denouncing the Tories’ class war.

She quoted US abolitionist

Frederick Douglass and said, “Now is the time to fight.”

Max O’Donnell-Savage, from the Unite union focussed on what happens after 18 June and the need to build power in the workplace to organise and fight for a better world.

Kevin Maguire, associate editor of the Daily Mirror, called the meeting inspiring.

The main keynote speaker was Dave Ward, general secretary of the CWU union.

He called for a mass turnout on 18 June.

He added, “We want the Tories out but we’re not simply handing over to Labour. We need real change for working people. So 18 June is just the start.

“The plan is to build a new social movement with trade unions working with community organisations to build collective action.

“I hope the Labour Party get behind this, otherwise there’s no point in a Labour Party”.

Hastings Trade Union Council has booked transport for 18 June and plans for workplace leafleting and street stalls to publicise the protest.

The demonstration must be built as big as possible. It can help more workers feel confident to fight over pay and other issues.

But it must be the beginning of real struggle, a launchpad for the big strikes and further mass demonstrations that are so urgently needed.

Hastings report by Simon Hester

●For details of the demonstration, leafleting and rallies go to bit.ly/TUC1806

POST OFFICE AND BT WORKERS

More strikes coming in Post Offices—and BT vote

POST OFFICE workers were set to hit back over pay with strikes spread over two days on Saturday of this week and Monday of next.

The members of the CWU union are furious at bosses’ offer of a meagre 2 percent pay increase—well below inflation—for 2022, following a pay freeze in 2021.

The planned action will see workers at 114 Crown Post Offices—the major Post Office branches that are still state-owned—striking on Saturday of this week.

Supply chain and admin workers—including those who transport cash to every Post Office branch—are set to follow on Monday of next week.

There will be no cash collections or deliveries

to any of Britain 11,500 sub-post offices. This follows a successful one-day strike in May.

■**WORKERS AT BT could be heading for their first national strike since 1994, in a major dispute over pay.**

Members of the CWU union are set to begin voting in a strike ballot from Wednesday 15 June.

It comes after BT bosses imposed a pay increase of £1,500 earlier in April without any agreement from the union.

Though bosses touted the figure as an 8 percent rise for some workers, for others it’s as little as 3 percent.

And with the RPI rate of inflation over 11 percent, it’s a real terms pay cut for everybody.

TRANSPORT

Tube strike off, Arriva is on

THE RMT union has suspended strikes set for 3 June at Euston and Green Park Underground stations in London. It says there has been “significant progress” with management.

Station staff at the two stations have faced bullying and intimidation from a single manager for years.

Now a review with union involvement will be held to deal with the bullying issue.

The pressure of strikes hitting the Jubilee weekend has led to this result and some staff and RMT members are happy with the result.

But the threat of strike shouldn’t have been withdrawn until the staff got full justice and the removal of the manager from London Underground.

If the review fails the RMT must call more strikes over a longer period.

■**BUS WORKERS employed by Arriva in Yorkshire are braced for an indefinite walkout to tackle low pay.**

Over 650 workers voted overwhelmingly to strike after rejecting the company’s pitiful offer of a 4.1 percent pay increase.

Inflation currently stands at 11.1 percent which workers cite as the reason for the rejection.

All out strikes are set to begin on Monday across depots in Castleford, Dewsbury, Heckmondwike, Selby and Wakefield.

Both drivers and engineers will unite on the picket lines.

The Unite union says new bus drivers are paid just 28 pence above the minimum wage

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said, “Arriva is part of a multi-billion company.

“It has no business demanding that workers get by on pitiful low pay so that its boardroom can get ever richer.

“Arriva can easily afford to pay decently. It should do just that, or face industrial action.”

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Pile on pressure to win in Coventry bins battle

by A UNITE MEMBER

FORMAL TALKS have started between Coventry council and Unite union reps and officials over the long-running HGV2 drivers’ strike.

The strike committee is insistent that any settlement must address the original pay questions and also include the withdrawal of disciplinary action against their deputy convenor Pete Randle.

Local activists have held a series of protests outside any business with any connection to Tom White Waste (TWW) management or which uses the company for refuse collection.

TWW, wholly-owned by the Labour-led council, is organising scabbing to undermine the strike.

These protests have blocked scab trucks leaving TWW for at least 90 minutes on a number

BIN WORKERS

Pay boost in Rugby as bin strikes now spread further

AFTER FIVE weeks of strong strikes workers for Rugby council have called off their action after accepting an improved offer from the council.

Refuse drivers will see their total pay rise to £30,940 per year.

Refuse loaders will be paid £24,018 a year and street cleaners will get a similar sum of £24,587. These increases amount to as much as a 12 percent pay rise.

However, the rise is lower for some grades. They face a below-inflation settlement.

The council has tried to suggest that this increase was down to a nationally-agreed pay rise.

But it was only because of strikes that workers received the deal.

In Chesterfield in Derbyshire, 100 percent of refuse workers, in the GMB union, voted to reject a 4.48 percent pay rise offered to them by outsourcer Veolia.

PCS UNION CONFERENCE

PCS backs national vote

DELEGATES AT THE PCS union conference voted last week for a national strike ballot over pay, pensions and redundancy payments, starting in September.

Government bosses have offered civil service workers pay rises of only 2 percent for 2022. Moving the motion, PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka

of days. Despite the talks, HGV2 drivers began voting this week to extend the strike by a further 12 weeks.

Unite must keep the pressure on.

This means, for example, calling for and building for a national solidarity demonstration on the Coventry picket line.

It also means building the protests outside Tom White Waste. It would be good if the union organised large numbers of strikers themselves to do this so that no individual is picked on.

Donations are still needed to back one of the longest running Unite disputes in local government.

●Donations to Unity trust Bank, Unite WM/7116 Coventry Local Government, Account Number 20302665, Sort Code 60-83-01. Messages of support to pete.randle@unitetheunion.org

The union noted that the company did say it would offer a six percent increase—but only if workers quit their union.

They rightly refused such blackmail.

Refuse workers for the Rhondda Cynon Taf council have also voted to strike after over pay.

An impressive 95 percent of GMB union members backed strikes. This means that 130 workers will now strike.

Refuse workers who are outsourced to contractor Amey could also strike on the Isle of Wight.

A strong 91 percent of workers voted to strike on a 78 percent turnout.

Workers in Littlehampton in West Sussex will also ballot for strikes.

Bin strikes are continuing to spread and in many cases they are winning significant pay increases.

●Pay battles and arrests in Wealden bin strike (see page 6)

called on union activists to “get back to your branches, organise, mobilise, and send Boris Johnson a message.”

But Serwotka also warned that activists had to do a lot of campaigning to ensure a ballot beats the 50 percent turnout threshold in Tory anti-union laws.

●Full report and debate on Ukraine at bit.ly/SWonPCS2022

WORKERS READY FOR NATIONAL RAIL STRIKE

by SAM ORD

AROUND 40,000 railway workers employed by Network Rail and 13 operators are building up to the biggest rail strike since privatisation.

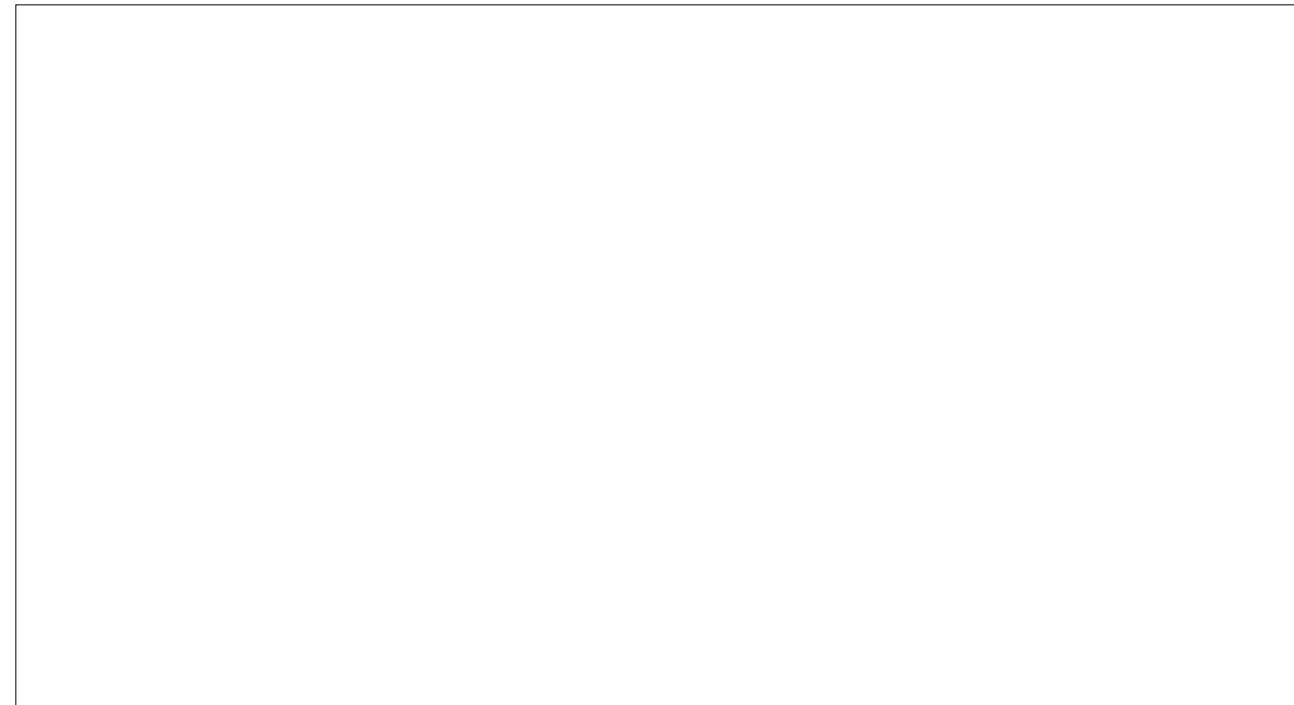
The RMT union members voted overwhelmingly to strike for jobs, pensions and safety. They will likely walk out in mid-June.

Dan, a Network Rail worker in the West Midlands, told Socialist Worker, "We want a pay rise in line with inflation and a guarantee of no redundancies or any detrimental changes to our working conditions.

"Specifically within Network Rail we want to see the plans for 2,500 safety critical maintenance job losses and dangerous maintenance schedule changes scrapped."

Bosses fear that the strike will massively disrupt the supply and distribution of goods and many workers will be unable to make it into work.

Dan is preparing for a backlash. He said, "Other than energy no other industry



has a larger impact on British capitalism than the transport industry. The railway with its natural monopoly is best placed to realise this power.

"We worked throughout the pandemic, keeping the

railway going for absolutely nothing, we haven't had a pay rise in over two years."

"In the run up to the ballot we were sent a lot of company propaganda. I think this actually worked against

the company, promoting the dispute in areas of low union activity. We saw through this propaganda as an act of desperation."

Dan added, "There's definitely an appetite for

strikes. People are angry about the lack of a pay rise, the fact our colleagues could be losing their jobs and that the railway will be a less safe place.

"Morale at work is the lowest I've ever seen." Network

Rail worker Andy from Barking in east London told Socialist Worker that the overwhelming ballot result will "send a clear message to the bosses".

"They're robbing us," he said.

"Some of the people who have been working just four or five years have only experienced the pandemic and now the bosses want to rinse them."

Andy said that his workmates are excited that others around the country are willing to stand up for themselves, and are motivated by the cost of living crisis.

He added that "the more militant members are pushing for a long strike."

He also hopes the strike will have an impact beyond the rail bosses. "Inflation is only going to get worse.

"The Tories need to be shown action, not just words, that working class people are united against low wages," he said.

Dan added, "The RMT must call strikes immediately. It can't just be a one off either, a whole programme of dates for the next six months need to be announced.

LONDON UNDERGROUND

Tube workers set for new walkout in fight to save hundreds of jobs

STATION STAFF on the London Underground network were set to walk out for 24 hours on Monday of next week against the threat of job cuts.

Transport for London wants to slash jobs as part of an emergency Covid pandemic funding deal with the government.

Station worker Sadie told Socialist Worker, "I haven't spoken to anyone who has said they won't join the strike. There is a lot of anger among customer support assistants at my stations, and hearing the details of what bosses



want to cut has only strengthened the mood.

"We are already reliant on station staff doing overtime to keep stations open, constantly receiving emails appealing for overtime to stop stations from closing.

"It's a joke to think that we could run the London Underground properly with the level of cuts they want to make, and station staff can see that.

"This is why the overtime ban is also really important, if workers refuse to do overtime it will really expose just how dire the situation already is.

"I would say that not everyone thinks we can win on everything, but the fact that we are going to resist seems to be a given for people. We are also re-balloting for strikes and need to deliver another big vote to show we are prepared to fight."

Sadie and her workmates walked out for two 24 hour strikes in March.

She added, "I think we urgently need a programme of escalating strikes that is spelled out in advance so that people know we are serious about resisting the cuts.

"The bosses have

shown no sign of backing off. Instead they are ploughing ahead with specific plans for how to make cuts in stations. The plans are brutal, with some stations facing a nearly 50 percent cut to the numbers of customer service assistants.

"It's good that the union has called another strike on 6 June but it won't be enough to stop the attacks. We need much more. And there was too long a gap between this and our March strikes.

"I think the union needs to call more strikes involving all members, not just station staff."